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Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Presentation of the Fund

1. A description of the mandate and administration of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture is contained in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/52/387, paras. 7-11). The Secretary-General has renewed the current membership of the Board of Trustees up to 31 December 2000.

II. Contributions and pledges

2. Every year, the Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and private individuals. In order to meet requests for financing during the current year, contributions must be paid into the Fund before May, in order to be available and duly recorded when the annual session of the Board of Trustees is held. Any contribution made later is carried over to the following year.

A. Payment of contributions

1. Trends in the number of States contributing to the Fund

3. The number of States contributing to the Fund rose from 5 in 1982 to 37 in 1998 (1982:5, 1983:8, 1984:18, 1985:13, 1986:21, 1987:19, 1988:24, 1989:20, 1990:14, 1991:20, 1992:16, 1993:27, 1994, 30, 1995:25, 1996:26, 1997:32, 1998:37).

4. Subsequent to the Secretary-General's previous report to the General Assembly (A/52/387), 37 Governments made voluntary contributions to the Fund between 25 September 1997 and 31 July 1998, as indicated in table 1.

Table 1
Government contributions from 25 September 1997 to 31 July 1998

Government	*Contribution (United States dollars)*	*Year*	*Contribution number*
Algeria	5 000	1998	6
Argentina	2 000	1997	8
	5 000	1998	9
Australia	60 620	1998	6
Austria	20 000	1998	15
Belgium	82 487	1998	8
Canada	17 099	1998	15
Chile	10 000	1998	6
Cyprus	945	1998	10
Denmark	288 830	1998	16
Finland	186 986	1997	15
	179 380	1998	16
France	80 515	1997	19
Germany	17 442	1997	15
	112 359	1998	16

Government	*Contribution (United States dollars)*	*Year*	*Contribution number*
Greece	10 300	1998	15
Holy See	1 000	1997	3
Iceland	5 587	1998	12
Israel	5 000	1998	3
Italy	363 932	1994 to 1997	6 to 9
Japan	90 000	1997	12
Kenya	1 000	1998	5
Liechtenstein	6 622	1998	10
Malta	1 500	1997	4
Monaco	10 810	1997	4
	8 183	1998	5
Netherlands	378 517	1997	15
	36 914	1998	16
	486 097	1998	17
New Zealand	15 555	1998	12
Norway	133 642	1998	13
Peru	1 500	1998	1
Portugal	10 000	1997	2
Republic of Korea	15 000	1998	5
Senegal	974	1998	2
South Africa	30 000	1998	3
Spain	47 015	1997	12
Sri Lanka	1 000	1998	8
Switzerland	30 822	1998	10
Tunisia	1 541	1997	7
United Kingdom	51 621	1997	8
	116 667	1998	9
	83 333	1998	10
United States of America	1 500 000	1998	16
Venezuela	10 996	1998	1

5. The following should be noted with respect to table 1: Peru and Venezuela contributed to the Fund for the first time. The United Kingdom increased its 1998 contribution fourfold compared to 1997 and Norway and the Netherlands nearly doubled theirs compared to 1996. Australia and South Africa increased their contributions. Italy contributed the amounts it had pledged for the years 1994 to 1997. For the fifth consecutive year, the United States of America contributed $1.5 million, thus becoming the main contributor to the Fund ahead of Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Norway and Sweden.

2. Contributions from non-governmental organizations and private individuals

6. A contribution of $105 was received from the Society of Friends (Quakers) and a contribution of $5,080 from the Dutch section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). Ms. Rita Maran (United States of America) maintained her support for the Fund in 1997 with a donation of $25.

3. Contributions received in time for allocation at the seventeenth session of the Board

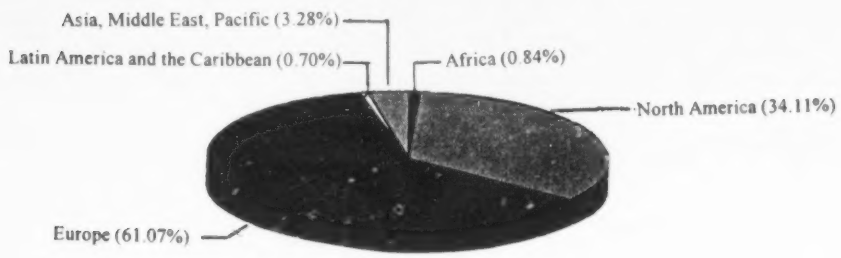
7. Table 2 lists the contributions received in time for allocation at the seventeenth session of the Board, that is to say, between 31 May 1997 and 10 May 1998:

Table 2
Contributions received in time for allocation at the seventeenth session of the Board

State	*Amount (United States dollars)*	*1997*	*1998*
Algeria	5 000		X
Argentina	3 000	X	
	2 000	X	
	5 000		X
Australia	50 000	X	
Austria	20 000	X	
	20 000		X
Belgium	82 487	X	
Canada	17 099		X
Chile	10 000		X
Cyprus	945		X
Denmark	288 830		X
Finland	186 986	X	
	179 380		X
France	80 515	X	
Germany	11 561	X	
	17 442	X	
Greece	10 300	X	
	10 300		X
Holy See	1 000	X	
Israel	5 000		X
Japan	90 000	X	
Liechtenstein	6 622		X
Luxembourg	11 197	X	
Malta	1 500	X	
Monaco	10 810	X	
	8 183		X
Netherlands	378 517	X	
	36 914		
	486 097		X
Norway	138 246	X	

State	*Amount (United States dollars)*	*1997*	*1998*
Portugal	10 000	X	
Senegal	974		X
South Africa	30 000		X
Spain	47 015	X	
Sri Lanka	1 000	X	
	1 000		X
Sweden	388 601	X	
Switzerland	30 822	X	
Tunisia	1 541	X	
United Kingdom	51 621	X	
	116 667		X
	83 333		X
United States of America	1 500 000		X
Venezuela	10 996		X
Quakers	105	X	
Ms. Maran	25		X
Total	**4 448 631**		

Graph 1
Contributions received for the seventeenth session



B. Pledges

8. Government pledges to the Fund are made either directly to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, or at the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, held in New York, or at the annual session of the Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva.

9. The following pledges were received as at 31 July 1998.

Country	*United States dollars*	*Year*
Andorra	5 000	1997
Australia	100 000 $A	1998
Brazil	10 000	1995
	10 000	1996
	10 000	1997
France	83 195	1998
Italy	92 754	1998
Luxembourg	22 535	1998
Philippines	10 000	1998
Portugal	15 000	1998
Sweden	380 000	1998
Switzerland	30 822	1998
United States of America	300 000	1998

C. How to make a contribution to the Fund

10. To contribute to the Fund by bank transfer, pay to: "United Nations Geneva General Fund", c/o Société de banque suisse, B. P. 2770, CH-1211 Genève 2, either in United States dollars (specify account No. CO-590-160.1) or in Swiss francs (specify account No. CO-590-160.0). Payment may also be made by cheque, payable to "the United Nations", addressed to:

Trésorerie, ONU, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Genève 10,

or to:

Treasury, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, United States.

In all cases, please specify the following:

"payee: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, account CH".

III. Funds available

Amount of funds available for the seventeenth session

11. The Board of Trustees of the Fund held its seventeenth session at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 11 to 22 May 1998. In accordance with the rules governing the Voluntary Fund, 15 per cent of estimated annual expenditures must be earmarked as a reserve for the following year, and 13 per cent is the rate set for programme support costs.

After that reserve and support costs were deducted from the total contributions received in time for allocation at the seventeenth session of the Board, the total amount available on 11 May 1998, the first day of the seventeenth session of the Board of Trustees, came to US$ 4,210,000.

Amount available for the eighteenth session

12. A total amount of US$ 714,275 was received after 22 May 1998. This amount will be allocated at the eighteenth session in May 1999. The contributions were made by the following donors: Australia ($50,000), Germany ($60,620), Iceland ($5,587), Italy ($363,932), Kenya ($1,000), New Zealand ($15,555), Norway ($133,642), Peru ($1,500) and the Republic of Korea ($15,000). An amount of $5,080 was also received from the Netherlands section of the International Commission of Jurists. It should be recalled that an amount of $6.8 million was requested from the Fund in 1998. Should requests for financing remain at this level in 1999, contributions in the amount of approximately $6 million would have to be paid before May 1999 in order to fully meet such requests.

IV. Disbursements

Requests for assistance received

13. Requests for assistance for victims of torture are constantly increasing. In 1996, more than $5 million was requested from the Fund for 96 projects and sub-projects. In 1998, $6.8 million was requested for 118 projects in 54 countries.

Recommendations of the Board of Trustees at its seventeenth session

14. The Board of Trustees made project grant recommendations earmarking all available funds, i.e. US$ 4,210,000, of which $100,000 was for urgent grants falling between annual sessions of the Board of Trustees. Of that amount, payment of $3,266,725 is now being made for projects whose grants were not tied to any particular condition. An amount of $943,275 (including $100,000 from the emergency fund) is still pending and may be paid by the next session of the Board of Trustees for projects on which additional information was requested, once the organizations concerned provide the secretariat with the information requested by the Board of Trustees. It should also be recalled that, at its sixteenth session, the Board had recommended $3,036,054, of which $2,407,854 was paid in August 1997 and $388,000, between August 1997 and May 1998. A balance of $261,000 was therefore available for the seventeenth session.

Methods of work

15. For a detailed description of the guidelines for the consideration of requests for project financing and of assisted programmes (selection criteria, submission of a grant request, role of the Fund secretariat and of the Board of Trustees, types of requests received, urgent grants, etc.), the reader is referred to the reports of the Secretary-General (A/50/512, chap. IV, and A/48/520, annex I, the Secretary-General's consolidated report on 10 years (1982–1992) of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture).

16. Every year, since its first session, the Board of Trustees has adopted and, where necessary, revised its guidelines on the processing of the funding proposals received and the assisted projects. These guidelines are contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/48/520, annex I, chap. III and appendices II, IV and V, and annex V). The Board

transmits its recommendations to the Secretary-General for approval, and he reports thereon to the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights.

Decisions of the Fund secretariat

17. On 5 June 1998, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on behalf of the Secretary-General, approved the Board's recommendations on grants to 114 projects presented by 105 humanitarian organizations in 53 countries. Paragraph 21 below lists the organizations that authorized the Fund secretariat to mention the awarding of a grant in 1998. During the seventeenth session, the Board of Trustees heard, in closed meetings, eight representatives of organizations carrying out nine different projects. Despite the late payment of pledged amounts and the small number of regular donor States (37 out of a possible 187), the Board made an effort to honour every request for funding which met the selection criteria by awarding approximately 40 per cent of the budget requested, or sometimes more, according to the cost of the treatments offered and the number of victims assisted. Priority was given to the organizations which had most fully met the Board's requirements in terms of the submission of narrative and financial reports on the use of previous grants. Table 3 below shows the geographical distribution of grants recommended in 1998.

Table 3

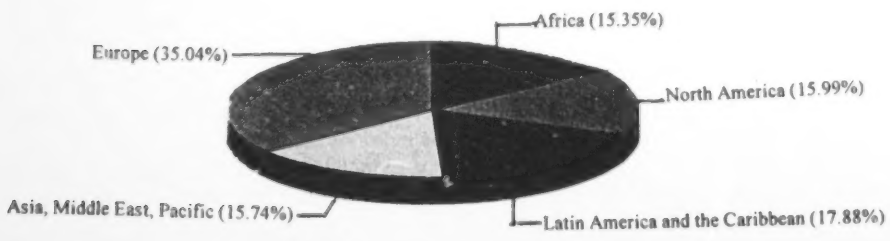
Geographical distribution of grants recommended in 1998

Region[a]	*Number of countries*	*Number of projects*	*Number of organizations*	*Grants (in United States dollars)*
1. Africa	13	17	17	631 000
2. North America	2	21	20	657 000
3. Latin America and the Caribbean	11	21	20	735 000
4. Asia, Middle East and Pacific	9	15	14	647 000
5. Europe	18	40	34	1 440 000
Total	**53**	**114**	**105**	**4 110 000**

[a] This regional distribution is based on the division of Member States of the General Assembly into regional groups and is employed to facilitate the work of the Fund secretariat and the Board of Trustees; it reflects the fact that many projects provide assistance to victims of torture in different countries of the same region.

Graph 2

Grants awarded in 1998



18. It should be noted that the grants awarded to organizations in North America and Western Europe are used for the treatment of victims of torture from a great many countries in other regions of the world, mainly applicants for asylum and refugee torture victims. It has been known for many years that at least 50 per cent of such applicants and refugees seeking asylum who have been subjected to any form of detention in their country of origin have been tortured.

19. From the establishment of the Fund until 22 May 1998, 299 files were started by the Fund secretariat. One organization may submit several projects, which may give rise to a number of subprojects.

20. At the end of its seventeenth session, the Board of Trustees held a press conference and an information briefing with representatives of interested donor States to announce how the funds would be disbursed.

21. The following organizations received support in 1998: Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo (Argentina), ACAT (Association des Chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture) (Mexico), ACTV (African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims) (Uganda), AMECON (Africa War Victims Medical Concern) (Uganda), Amigos de los Sobrevivientes (Oregon, United States), ATYHA (Centro de Alternativas en Salud Mental) (Paraguay), AVRE (Association pour les victimes de la répression en exil) (Paris), BALAY Incorporated (Quezon City, Philippines), Behandlungszentrum für Folteropfer (Berlin), CAPSDH-Burundi (Comission africaine des promoteurs de la santé et des droits de l'homme) (Bujumbura), CAPSDH-Ghana (Accra), CAPSDH-Guinea (Guinea), CAPSDH-Mozambique (Mozambique), CARITAS (Cologne), CCVT (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture) (Toronto), Centre for Justice and Accountability (California, United States), CDHES (Comisión de derechos humanos de El Salvador) (El Salvador), CEDAVIDA (Fundación Social Colombiana) (Bogotá), CEFPRODHAC (Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y de Promoción de los Derechos Humanos) (Tamaulipas, Mexico), CEJIL (Centre for Justice and International Law) (Washington, D.C.), Centre for Rehabilitation of War and Torture Survivors (Sweden), Centro Alternativas (Chile), CINTRAS (Centro de Salud Mental y Derechos Humanos) (Santiago), CMHS (Center for Multicultural Human Services) (Virginia, United States), CNDDHH (Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos) (Peru), CODESEDH (Comité para la Defensa de la Salud, la Ética Profesional y los Derechos Humanos) (Buenos Aires), COMEDE (Comité médical pour les exilés) (Paris), COMISEDH (Comisión de Derechos Humanos) (Peru), Cordelia Foundation (Hungary), CCRJ (Consulting Centre for Constitutional Rights and Justice) (Nigeria), CVICT (Centre for Victims of Torture) (Kathmandu), CVT (Center for Victims of Torture) (Minnesota, United States), EATIP (Equipo Argentino de Trabajo e Investigación Psicosocial) (Buenos Aires), ECSTT (Edmonton Centre for Survivors of Torture and Trauma) (Edmonton, Canada), EXIL (Centre médico-psychosocial pour réfugiés) (Brussels), FASIC (Fundación de Ayuda Social de las Iglesias Cristianas) (Santiago), FIND (Family of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance) (Philippines), FRC (Family Rehabilitation Centre) (Colombo), Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry and Ukrainian Psychiatric Association (Amsterdam), HRFT (Human Rights Foundation of Turkey) (Ankara/Istanbul/Izmir, Turkey); ICAR (Medical Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture) (Bucharest/Craiova/Iasi, Romania), International Society for Human Rights (United Kingdom); IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims) (Copenhagen), JKC (Refugee Advice Centre; Pakistan), Justice pour Tazmamart (France), Kanyarwanda (Rwanda), LRCT (Lahore Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Survivors) (Pakistan), LAPPH (Ligue des anciens prisonniers politiques haïtiens, des amis et parents de disparus) (Port-au-Prince), Marjorie Kovler Center (Chicago, United States), Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (London), Medical Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (Greece), Methodist

Church of Southern Africa (Durban, South Africa), Moscow Compassion Centre (Russian Federation), Movimiento Ecuménico para los Derechos Humanos (MOUTH), OMCT/SOS Torture (World Organization against Torture) (Geneva), OMEGA (Graz, Austria), OCISO (Ottawa-Carlton Immigrant Services Organization) (Canada), Physicians for Human Rights (Israel), POC (Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund) (London), Primo Levi (Paris), PTV (Program for Torture Victims) (California, United States), RCTV (Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims) (Ioannina, Greece), Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz (Caracas), Redress (London), Refugee Mental Health Access Project (Colorado, United States), Refugio (Bremen, Germany), Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture (Bosnia), Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture (Croatia), Restart Centre (Tripoli), RIVO (Réseau d'intervention auprès des personnes ayant subi la violence organisée) (Montreal), SERSOC (Uruguay), SMRC (Medical Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Torture), (Riga), Survivors of Torture International (California, United States), Survivors International of Northern California (United States), Swedish Red Cross (Malmö/Skovde/Stockholm/Uppsala, Sweden), Swiss Red Cross (Berne), TNM (Tortura Nunca Mais) (Rio de Janeiro), TOHAV (Turkey), TRUSTT (Brisbane), VAST (Vancouver Association for the Survivors of Torture) (Vancouver), VAT (Voice Against Torture) (Islamabad), Victim Services (New York), XENION (Berlin), ZEBRA (Zentrum zur sozialmedizinischen, rechtlichen und kulturellen Betreuung von Ausländern und Ausländerinnen) (Graz, Austria), as well as 17 other humanitarian organizations that provide medical, psychological and social assistance or train health professionals.

V. Fund-raising

A. Appeals by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights

22. In its resolution 36/151 of 16 December 1981, by which it established the Fund, the General Assembly authorized the Board of Trustees to promote and solicit contributions and pledges. It also requested the Secretary-General to give the Board of Trustees all the assistance it might require and appealed to all Governments to respond favourably to requests for contributions to the Fund.

23. In keeping with the programme of work it outlined in decision 48/431 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly adopts resolutions concerning the Fund only in even years. Resolution 51/86 of 12 December 1996 is the latest one it has adopted on the matter. The Assembly, in this resolution, and the Commission on Human Rights, in resolution 1998/38 of 9 April 1998, appealed to all Governments, organizations and individuals in a position to do so to respond favourably to requests for contributions to the Fund, if possible on a regular basis and annually before the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Fund. The General Assembly should adopt a resolution concerning the Fund in 1998.

B. Letters to States

24. The Board of Trustees greatly appreciated the initiative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in sending, on 10 November 1997, a letter to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of States that had never contributed to the Fund, inviting them to do so for the first time, and another letter to States that were regular contributors, encouraging them to increase their support (see paras. 3-9 above).

VI. International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June

25. In its resolution 52/149, the General Assembly proclaimed 26 June United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. On that occasion, the Committee Against Torture, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on torture and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights adopted a joint declaration, which is reproduced in annex I. In addition, at a gathering organized by IRCT in Copenhagen, Mr. Lamin Sise delivered a message on behalf of the Secretary General, which is reproduced in annex II. To celebrate this day, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organized an exhibition of works by victims of torture at the Palais des Nations from 25 June to 2 July 1998. The exhibit included around 100 paintings, posters, drawings, photographs and sculptures sent to the secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture by some 30 organizations that have assisted such victims and their families, thanks to the financial support they receive from the Fund (see also press releases SG/SM/6610, HR/4372 and HR/98/42).

26. An exhibit was also organized at United Nations Headquarters in New York by the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations. A number of events, including seminars and art, poetry and essay contests on the subject of torture, were held around the world to celebrate this day.

VII. Conclusions

27. The Fund's support is vital for the organizations concerned, because sources of funding for assistance to victims of torture are limited, and because programmes of assistance to victims are sometimes halted owing to insufficient financing. Ever-increasing financial support is needed. Donors wishing to contribute to the Fund are requested to refer to paragraph 10 above for information regarding modalities of payment; for further information, they may also consult the Fund secretariat, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. By contributing to the Fund States demonstrate their commitment to combating torture and their solidarity with the victims, and enable the latter to receive medical, psychological, social or legal assistance and to lead more or less "normal" lives. According to information available to the High Commissioner, assistance granted by the Fund in 1997 made it possible to help approximately 59,000 victims of torture throughout the world.

Annex I

Joint declaration on the occasion of 26 June 1998, International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

The Committee against Torture, the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on questions relating to torture and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, meeting at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 19 May 1998, in anticipation of the occasion of 26 June 1998, International Day in Support of Victims of Torture,

Recalling the appeal against torture of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, made at Copenhagen on 28 June 1994, in which he stated that ending torture is a beginning of true respect for the most basic of all human rights – the intrinsic dignity and value of each individual,

Welcoming the decision of the General Assembly to declare 26 June International Day in Support of Victims of Torture,

Recognizing that torture is one of the vilest acts to be perpetrated by human beings upon each other,

Recognizing that torture is prohibited by article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Recognizing that torture is a breach of a non-derogable human right and a crime under international law,

1. *Urge all States* to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment without reservation, if they have not already done so;

2. *Urge States Parties* to the Convention that have not yet accepted its optional provisions to do so as soon as possible;

3. *Urge all States* to ensure that torture is a crime in their domestic law, and to rigorously pursue perpetrators whenever the act is committed and bring them to justice;

4. *Urge all States* to provide for compensation and rehabilitation of the victims of torture in their domestic law;

5. *Urge all States* to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture as fully and as often as they can;

6. *Urge all States* to cooperate with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture in fulfilling his or her mandate when requested to do so;

7. *Consider* that by these means the vile crime of torture may be condemned and suppressed by all the people of the world.

Annex II

Message of the Secretary-General on the occasion of 26 June 1998, International Day in Support of Victims of Torture*

Copenhagen, 26 June 1998

This is a day on which we pay our respects to those who have endured the unimaginable. This is an occasion for the world to speak up against the unspeakable. It is long overdue that a day be dedicated to remembering and supporting the many victims and survivors of torture around the world.

The date 26 June was not chosen at random. It was the day on which, 11 years ago, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment came into force after Denmark became the twentieth country to ratify the treaty. It was also the day on which 53 years ago, the Charter of the United Nations was signed – the first international treaty providing obligations for Member States to promote and encourage respect for human rights.

Just under four years ago, here at Copenhagen on 28 June 1994, the then High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. José Ayala Lasso, delivered an appeal against torture. That "Copenhagen Appeal" paid tribute to all those who work selflessly to relieve the suffering and assist the recovery of torture victims around the world. Their work, the work of the Copenhagen Centre and many other organizations and individuals, deserve the gratitude of the United Nations. We also very much appreciate the continued support of the Government of Denmark and other Governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, in the struggle to eradicate torture.

Since its birth, the United Nations has worked towards the goal of eradicating torture. Numerous legal and political means have been identified, approved and implemented. The Charter of the United Nations was the first international instrument to call for a specific commission for the promotion of human rights. One of the first tasks assigned to the Commission was to draft a declaration of rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary we celebrate in 1998, provided for the first international prohibition of torture. Article 5 of the Declaration proclaims that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

Various international conventions have since reaffirmed, expanded and integrated that prohibition into positive public international law. They include the Geneva Conventions of 1949 on humanitarian law and the European, American and African regional conventions on human rights. The United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, currently meeting in Rome, is studying proposals concerning a mandate to cover torture. But as things stand today, sanctions are still sorely lacking at the international level.

More than 100 States have ratified the Convention Against Torture. That means they have accepted obligations to take effective measures to prevent acts of torture and to ensure that any act of torture is an offence punishable under their criminal law. Many national constitutions, criminal codes, laws and regulations proclaim the prohibition of torture. Yet torture is still reported even in those countries. And so, more than a decade after the

* Delivered by Mr. Lamin Sise, Principal Officer, Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

Convention Against Torture came into force, the international community has realized the need to place a further spotlight on this atrocious phenomenon. We should make use of this day to bring torture to the renewed attention of the world's conscience.

In 1998, the four main United Nations organs working on questions relating to torture issued a Joint Declaration (see annex I above). The Committee against Torture, the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on questions relating to torture and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights urged all States to ratify the Convention against Torture without reservation if they have not already done so; to ensure that torture is a crime in their domestic law and rigorously pursue perpetrators whenever the act is committed and bring them to justice; to provide for compensation and rehabilitation of the victims of torture in their domestic law; to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture as fully and as often as they can; and to cooperate with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture in fulfilling his or her mandate when requested to do so.

The Joint Declaration expresses the hope that by these means, the vile crime of torture may be condemned and suppressed by all the people of the world.

The United Nations was founded to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person, and to create better standards of life in larger freedom. We cannot get anywhere near fulfilling that pledge unless we wipe the scourge of torture off the face of the earth. Let us, therefore, seize this day. Today, the United Nations appeals to all Governments and members of civil society to take action, every year, at the international, regional, national, provincial, community, village, professional, family and individual levels, to defeat torture and tortures everywhere.

The United Nations will support you every step of the way, until the day arrives when torture is finally consigned to the darkest spaces of history and historical museums. In conclusion, the message to be sent from this splendid hall here at Copenhagen and from other observances around the world is that the torture of one human being torments the consciences of all human beings. Action, not indifference, must be the motto to eradicate torture and support in the rehabilitation of its victims.